



Abbey Letter
no. 252

Christmas 2012



Abbot Andrew



Prior Aelred



Fr. Jude

*The monks of St. Gregory's Abbey
thank you for your prayers and gifts,
and we pray that you and the entire
world may have a joyful Christmas
and a peaceful and prosperous 2013.*

Fr. William



Br. Martin



Br. Abraham



John

NOTES

John David Moore from Mulberry, Indiana, has joined us as a postulant.

Br. Cassian has withdrawn from the novitiate.

Abbot Andrew spoke to an Introduction to World Religions class at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo on October 31st.

Fr. William continues his ministry to the Formation Group of the Diocese of Northern Indiana. This group of people preparing locally for ordination meets every few months for mutual exchange, discussion, and presentations concerning practical issues pertaining to ordained ministry. Fr. William is in charge of the spiritual life part of the program.

Abbot Andrew has a new blog called "Imaginary Visions of True Peace" at

andrewmarrosb.wordpress.com

The blog is designed to promote all of his books and contains comments on Benedictine spirituality, fantasy fiction, and other topics. The blog is linked to Twitter and Facebook, and can also be reached via a link from our monastery website **saintgregorysthreerivers.org** Please spread the word!



John David Moore

CONTACTING THE ABBEY

Mailing address -

St. Gregory's Abbey
56500 Abbey Road
Three Rivers, MI 49093

Telephone -

269-244-5893

9:30am - 11:15am or 2:30pm - 4:15pm Eastern Time Monday through Saturday
(please do not telephone at other times or on Sundays or holidays)

E-mail -

Guest reservations and information -

guestmaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Mailing list -

office@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Abbot Andrew -

abbot@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Information about becoming a monk or participating in the July Program -

novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Books and calendars may be ordered, prayers requested, and donations made at our website -

www.saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Leonard, Sheldon, and Penny Discuss the Implications of the Incarnation

We don't have a lot of time to watch television at the monastery, and even if we did, most of us would probably not watch a lot of it anyway, simply because other interests attract our attention. I do make a habit of watching an evening network news broadcast as often as I can, and usually stick around to see the beginning of whatever syndicated sitcom airs immediately after the news. After that it is time for chores or community recreation or bed. It is amazing how much of the story line one can pick up from the introduction to these shows before the theme song and commercial break. The show that I currently glimpse — *The Big Bang Theory* — is one of the funniest in a long time (it also has one of the best theme songs in television history). The story is built around two nerdy young men who share an apartment and work at Caltech. Sheldon is a theoretical physicist and Leonard is an experimental physicist. Their pretty female neighbor across the hall (Penny) is a waitress and aspiring actress who, although not possessing as much formal education as her neighbors, is much smarter than them in almost all aspects of daily life.

Like most young people in sitcoms, these three characters have much larger apartments, much more free time, and much more disposable income than people their own age in the real world. And like most sitcoms, they use all that space, time, and money having wacky adventures. Another thing they tend to do a lot is sit around the coffee table in the guys' apartment eating take-out and discussing nerdy things like comic books, *Star Trek*, and particle physics. Sometimes their other nerdy friends show up and join the conversation — all of them exhibiting varying degrees of incomprehension of and romantic interest in Penny, who is equally as puzzled by them.

Take away Penny and the Chinese food, and the scene is a lot like the monastery common room during community recreation here at St. Gregory's. We also can be nerdy at times, discussing comic books, *Star Trek*, and particle physics. We have a periodic table of the elements close at hand as well as dictionaries, atlases, and world almanacs that we consult frequently. However, we do go beyond the nerdish areas and frequently discuss other things such as sports, movies, politics, music, art, books, current events, and sometimes even religious topics. Like Leonard and Sheldon, we talk about things we love, but our discussions are broader than theirs because, as is common with nuns and monks around the world and throughout history, we are deeply and madly in love with the entire world. Contrary to popular opinion, nuns and monks do not enter the monastery

because they hate the world and want to get away from it. The opposite is actually true: nuns and monks deeply love the world and the people in it; we just need extra time and space to get to know it better and love it even more deeply, and we come to the monastery to do just that. Historically, Christian monasteries have had well-stocked libraries reflecting that love for the world and the desire to know more of it. Nowadays, in addition to our extensive library, we also have a good CD and DVD collection, as well as the ability to research things online.

This love for our world and the people in it is a reflection of God's love for his creation. God needs no one else, yet lovingly gives existence to the universe (or multiverse, or universes, or whatever you want to call the entirety of creation). As Christians, we acknowledge the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, which means we believe that God loves the universe so much and the people in it so much that God freely chose to become a human and live in the universe in order to experience it firsthand. In theological terms, we say that Jesus of Nazareth is fully human and fully God. In nerdy terms, we could say that because of the Incarnation of God in human form, we share DNA with God. Further, because the Holy God became matter in the person of Jesus, matter is holy. Maybe a nerdy way to express that concept is to say that the creator and creation have experienced entanglement and will forever be influenced by each other.

Belief in the entanglement of God and matter should influence our actions and attitudes toward our world and the people in it. Our universe is good enough for God to choose to live in, so we should treat everything in it as the holy home of the Holy God. The human race was good enough for God to freely choose to be one of us, so we should treat every person as the relative of God that they in fact are. We know we don't do those things, or at least not very often. Most of the time, we act as if the world revolved around us, rather than God, putting us out of sync with the way the universe actually operates, and creating problems for ourselves and everyone around us. That is why we need to do the things that wise people throughout history have done and have suggested that we do in order to put our lives in balance with God at the center: pray, read scripture, meet with others who are trying to put God in the center, give money to others in need, don't talk so much, etc. Slowly and surely our actions will more closely reflect our beliefs, even though we will often make mistakes and need to start over and over again in our attempt to treat the world and the people in it as the holy things that they are. The important thing is to keep on trying, because the Incarnation has implications. Discuss that, my nerdy friends.

— Br. Abraham

Music compositions from St. Gregory's Abbey

Missa Brevis choral symphony by Br. Abraham - Latin text from the ordinary of the mass

Rumi choral symphony by Br. Abraham - English translation of the poems of Rumi

A Symphony of Psalms choral symphony by Br. Abraham - Latin text of four psalms

The Kiss baritone voice and string quartet by Br. Abraham - texts from office readings for Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary

Tuesday Afternoon chorus and wind octet by Br. Abraham - psalms from Tuesday vespers

Life of Benedict orchestral setting of Gregory the Great's *Life of Benedict* by John Webber

Composers' notes and essays, free perusal MP3 files of synthesized performances of individual movements, free perusal PDF files of full scores and piano reductions are available at

webbermusic.com

for *Missa Brevis*, *Rumi*, *A Symphony of Psalms*, *The Kiss*, and *Tuesday Afternoon*, click on 'list by composer' and then select 'Newsom, A'; for *Life of Benedict*, select 'Webber, J.'

All perusal files are free, but donations are welcome and can be made at the website or sent to St. Gregory's Abbey designated for "music compositions." Hard copies of scores and orchestral parts are for sale at list price from webbermusic.com



St. Gregory's Abbey July Vocation Program

Spend two weeks (or more) in July with the monks of St. Gregory's Abbey, a Benedictine monastery of the Episcopal Church at Three Rivers, Michigan.

Worship & Pray Work & Learn

For males 18 to 50 who can stay for at least two weeks. The only cost is \$25 for registration.

For more information, use the envelope bound in this issue of the *Abbey Letter* or write:

July Program Director

St. Gregory's Abbey

56500 Abbey Road

Three Rivers, MI 49093

novicemaster@saintgregorysthreerivers.org

Applications will be accepted after January 1, 2013.

saintgregorysthreerivers.org

2013 St. Gregory's Abbey Calendar

13 months, 15 photos, with the Abbey's liturgical calendar

2013 Calendar Now Available As A PDF Download At Our Website.

Hard copies may also be purchased at our website or by using this order form.

\$10.00 Please send ____ copies. Please allow 8 weeks for delivery.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Any payment in excess of the calendar price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.

St. Gregory's Abbey, 56500 Abbey Road, Three Rivers, MI 49093-9595

Books from St. Gregory's Abbey

Singing God's Praises (1998)

history of the community, select Abbey Letter articles, photographs

\$20.00 Please send ____ copies. \$ _____

Come Let Us Adore (2011)

*select Abbey Letter Articles from 1999 to 2011 (companion book to **Singing God's Praises**)*

\$20.00 Please send ____ copies. \$ _____

Tools For Peace (2007)

Abbot Andrew's reflections on St. Benedict and René Girard

\$24.00 Please send ____ copies. \$ _____

Born in the Darkest Time of Year (2004)

15 Christmas stories by Abbot Andrew

\$16.00 Please send ____ copies. \$ _____

Creatures We Dream of Knowing (2011)

fantasy stories by Abbot Andrew

\$20.00 Please send ____ copies. \$ _____

From Beyond to Here (2012)

more stories by Abbot Andrew

\$25.00 Please send ____ copies. \$ _____

All of the above except for **Singing God's Praises** and **Born in the Darkest Time of Year** are available in Nook and Kindle formats. To download and purchase, go to our website and click the "order publications (digital)" tab. saintgregorysthreerivers.org

All books may be purchased as hard copies from our website or by using this order form.

Enclosed is \$ _____ in full payment. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Any payment in excess of the book price will be gratefully accepted as a gift to the abbey.

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Saint Gregory's Abbey is the home of a community of men living under the Rule of Saint Benedict within the Episcopal Church. The center of the monastery's life is the Abbey Church, where God is worshiped in the daily round of Eucharist, Divine Office, and private prayer. Also offered to God are the monks' daily manual work, study and correspondence, ministry to guests, and occasional outside engagements.

The continuing existence of Saint Gregory's is made possible by the support of those who believe that the contemplative vocation within the Church finds valid expression there.

The monks ask your prayers and will be grateful for your offerings.

<http://saintgregorysthreerivers.org/donate.html> to donate online

Donations may be mailed to:
Saint Gregory's Abbey
56500 Abbey Road
Three Rivers, MI 49093-9595